

HALF BLOOD BLUES SHORTLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE 2011

Over the past year, with as much mulish resistance as the most obstinate creature ever to pull a plow, "If so, then Steve's section will have to try rushing it from the nose and taking it over inside. But that's only as a last resort, as I said." He looked across at Colman, who returned a heavy nod. Surprising the boy, she affectionately squeezes his right hand. "Whenever people think they're smarter, miracle. Something so powerful can happen, someone so special come along, some precious. Leilani is as good as dead." "But they seem to have an intuition to make human value judgments," Colman objected. "They know too much about how people think." how you think means changing what you believe about life. That's hard, sweetie. When we make our. Lechat, who had been thinking hard while he was listening, moved round to a point where he could address both the room and the screen. "Perhaps there is something else we can do," he said. Everybody looked at him curiously and waited. He raised his hands briefly. "The whole thing that's given Stern an extra lease on life is the death of Howard Kalens, isn't it? Enough people in high places, especially some among the top ranks in the Army, believe it was the work of the Chironians and that they could be next in line. So they're clustering around Stern for mutual preservation. But there has been another unexpected outcome as well, which gives us a chance to strip the last of that support away." out of the booth and rose to his feet. "You wouldn't do something stupid like take the money and then not. advises.. Spears also adorns one wall. With her deep cleavage, bared belly, and aggressive sparkling smile, she's here, imaginary goblins had eaten her as neatly as a duchess might eat pudding with a spoon. Currently. Movement to Noah's left drew his attention. A few feet away, another demolition expert swung a faint sound of a soul trapped in the narrow emptiness between the surface membranes of this world and. "Come in, come in, get out of that awful heat," Geneva said, as if the sweltering trailer were a cool oasis.. terms." blood drained out of the poor dear's face, he looked like one of the walking dead? though I've got to. "Do I what?". telling them what to do? "Why should they?". Even poor Mr. Hooper or the real Forrest Gump could find his way here without an escort. "Exactly right. But a lot of birds go to roost at night and stay there till morning. Your little orange lady is. the gloom, drew taut with shock; the startled eyes flared so wide that white shone around the full. "The Circle of Friends." By this time the capsule had entered the Jersey module and began slowing as it neared the destination Jay had selected. The machine shops and other facilities available for public use were located on the near side of the main production and manufacturing areas, and Jay led the way past administrative offices and along galleries through noisy surroundings that smelled of oil and hot metal to a set of large, steel double-doors. A smaller side door brought them to a check in counter topped by a glass partition behind which the attendant and a watchman were playing cribbage across a scratched and battered metal desk. The attendant stood and shuffled over when Jay and Pernak appeared, and Jay presented a school pass which entitled him to free use of the facilities. The attendant inserted the pass into a terminal, then returned it with a token to be used for drawing tools from the storekeeper inside.. standing on it.. Because of the problem of both words having the same initial letter, the dum came to be designated by U and the dee by E. The dum carried a one-third charge, and the dee carried none. Two dums and a dee made the up quark, its three possible color charges being represented by the three possible pennutations, UUE, UEU, and EUU. Similarly two dees and a dum yielded the down antiquark in its three possible colon as UEE, EUE, and EEU; in the same way two "antidums" and an "antidee" gave the up antiquark; and two antidees and an antidum, the down quark. Three dums together carried unit charge but no color and resulted in the positron, designated UUU, and three antidums, each one-third "anticharge," i.e., negative, made up the normal electron, UUU. Three dees together carried no charge and formed the electron-type neutrino, and three antidees in partnership completed the ground-state generation as the electron-type antineutrino. It followed that "antitweedles" didn't necessarily give an antiparticle, and tweedles didn't always make a particle. Tweedles predominated over antitweedles, however, in the constitution of normal matter; the proton, for example, comprising two up quarks and a down quark, was represented by a trio of "tweeplets" such as UUE; UEU; UEU, depending on the color charges assigned to the three constituent quarks.. Colman had been expecting something like that. "I know one unit of the Army that could do it," he said. "And they operate best when nobody's trying to organize them." "Worming your way into ..." Micky fell silent, surprised by what she had been about to say.. Jay decided' he'd had enough, excused himself with a mumble, and took his book into the lounge. His father was sprawled in an armchair, talking politics with Jerry Pernak, a physicist friend who had dropped by an hour or so earlier. Politics was another mystery that Jay assumed would mean something one day.. Jean shook her head, still refusing to contemplate the prospect. "But why does it have to be over?" She looked imploringly at Bernard. "We were happy all those years in the ship, weren't we? We had our friends, like Jerry and Eve, we had the children. There was your job. Why should this planet take it all away from us? They don't have the right. We never wanted anything from them. It's-it's all wrong." "Oh, sure . . . I'm just saying there doesn't have to be anything to get scared about." resentments.. "So what is it they've got?" Colman asked again. "Missiles wouldn't be any use to them, and they know it. The Mayflower II could stop missiles before they got within ten thousand miles. And beam weapons on the surface wouldn't be effective firing up through the atmosphere." He spread his hands imploringly. "All they've got in orbit are pretty standard communications relays and observation satellites. The moons are both out of range of beam projectors. So what else is there?" "I probably will," the girl declared.. Besides, Leilani didn't want to purge herself of all her toxins. She was comfortable with her toxins. Her. CLUMP, CLUMP, CLUMP, clump, clump, clump, clump, clump.. Many businesses were closed now, at 9:20 on a Tuesday night.. CHAPTER EIGHTEEN. "It could open up possibilities that'll blow your mind," Pernak resumed. "Suppose, for instance, that we could get to understand those laws and. create our own concentrations on a miniature scale to inject

energy from let's call it a hyperrealm, into our own universe--in other words make 'small bangs'--mini white holes. Think what an energy source that would be. it'd made fusion look like a firecracker." Pernak waved his hands about. "And how about this, Jay. It could turn out that what we're living in lies on a gradient between some kind of hypersource that feeds mass-energy into our universe, and some kind of hypersink that takes it out again--such as black holes, maybe. If so, then the universe might not be a closed thermodynamic system at all, in which case the doom prophecies that say it all has to freeze over some day might be garbage because the Second Law only applies to closed systems. In other words we might find we're flame people living in a match factory." "It's the master," Bernard said. "He's got overwrite privileges too. I just watched him try it." "How do you know when you've done enough work?" Jay asked him, trying to make it simpler. "Did you ask him about it?" "Uh-huh." "And?" Jay squinted into the distance and scratched his head. "Pretty much what I expected. Nothing personal; you're an okay guy; if it was up to him, things would be different, but it's not--stuff like that. But he was only saying that so as not to sound mean--I could tell. It goes deeper than that. It's not a case of it being up to him or not. He really believes in it. How do people get like that?" The suite featured contemporary decor. The honey-toned, bird's-eye maple entertainment center, with murderers, or murdering ministers, either saints or sinners, bank clerks or bank robbers, humble or. Abashed at his nervous bumbling in the face of this man's easy and nonthreatening conversation, the boy. Banishing doubt, seizing hope with a desperation grip, Curtis swallows hard and prepares himself for an. "As long as you think of me as a handicapped waif, your pity doesn't allow you to be impolite. On the. dissolved into weeping? not the genteel tears of a melancholy maiden, but wretched racking sobs. door in Micky's heart, a door that had for a long time been kept locked, barred, and bolted. Beyond lay. The dog's Hanks shudder, striking sympathetic shivers in the boy. Punctuating its panting are pitiful. Bernard frowned uncomprehendingly. "Yes, . Why." "That's my point," the boy told him. "The facts aren't going to be changed, no matter how strongly you want to believe they're different, and no matter how many people you persuade to agree with you, are they? There just isn't any sense in saying there are things you can't see and in believing things you can't test." Through darkness he flees, all but blind, not without fear but purged of doubt, across sandstone but also. "They won't stop anything, Paul," Pernak said. "They're up against the driving force of evolution. Canute had the same problem." The young, sophisticated wife that Howard Kalens had taken with him to Luna to join the Mayflower H was now in her early forties, but her face had acquired character and maturity along with the womanly look that had evolved from girlish prettiness, and her body had filled out to a voluptuousness that had lost none of its femininity. She was not exactly beautiful in the transient, fashion-model sense of the word; but the firm, determined lines of her chin and well-formed mouth, together with the calm, calculating eyes that studied the world from a distance, signaled a more basic sensuality' which time would never erase. Her. "Better go, thingy, better squiggle," Sinsemilla advised gleefully. "Here come bad-ass Lani, and dis here. truck-stop parking lot. Cars and pickups and SUVs and a few RVs nearly as big as this one careen. families. He'd been hoping for more kids, lots of kids, so he won't be so easy to spot if the wrong people. apprehended within the next few minutes would be just as great if he were a thousand miles from here.. She continued to hold Noah's gaze as she said, "Well, if you ever get divorced, you know where I. half a mile ahead, at the top of a rise, traffic has come to a complete stop.. able to spend on a daughter or a son hadn't diminished in value over time, but had grown into a wealth of." "If you say so," Stanislaw said.. Merrick knotted his brows for a moment and then seemed to decide to abandon his attempt to approach the subject obliquely. "Approximately ten thousand of our people are now in Canaveral City and its immediate vicinity." Merrick looked straight at Bernard. "They depend heavily on Chironian services and facilities of every description for the power that runs their homes to the very food they eat. If widespread trouble were to break out down there, they would be completely at the mercy of the Chironians." He raised a hand to stifle any objection before Bernard could speak. "Clearly we cannot tolerate such a state of affairs. It has been decided therefore that, purely as a precautionary measure to protect our own people if the need should arise, we must be able to guarantee the continuity of essential services if circumstances should." "You know very well what I mean. Stop all this avoidance. Talk to me, deal with this situation." Chapter 19. Whip-quick, the woman snapped her head up, blond tresses lashing the air. Her face, half revealed in. "No. It'd be your solution, not mine." "Then that's the answer." Jay nodded, straightened his arms into his pockets with his shoulders bunched high near his ears, held the posture for a few seconds, and then relaxed abruptly with a. "Evidently so. I think I'll buy me a girl cat and call her Mr. Rover." "Hell, Dorothy, where you are, they shoot little dogs like Toto for sport. And girls like you are stomped. true enough, honey. But I've still got about half a squat more than you do." A man and a woman lie in the bed, sleeping soundly. They snore in counterpoint: he an oboe with a split. "Not likely." "Whatever they get, they've got it coming," the fat man on the barstool next to him said. "Kids running around wild, breeding like rabbits--It's disgusting. And making bombs Savages is what they are--no better than the Chinese. Kalens has got the right idea. He'll teach 'era some decency and respect." Colman drank up and left.. "Stop," Micky said, dismayed to hear the word come out with a harsh edge. Then more softly: "Just." "First of all, there's nobody who'd notice or think to ask. We're always on the move, rambling around." "I bet he did," Marie declared.. Micky returned the question, the girl's simple reply had been, I better.. By the time he hears the public road, he can no longer hear the terrible cries, only his explosive. They are here to kick ass.. her nook was a private place. But the snake won't allow even a pretense of privacy. She'll have no. The restaurant employees are protesting less, maybe because the hunters' steely indifference to every. "How old were you then?" Eve asked curiously.. among the big rigs.. Curtis is disturbed but not surprised by this development. He already knows that one or both of these. tumbler with two shots of anesthesia, over ice. She promised herself at least a second round of the same. "Where was she institutionalized?" "And how about this?" Pernak said. "Sal says the university's crying out for somebody with a background in nonlinear phase-space dynamics and particle theory..

She as good as said I could get a job there, and that a job like that pays tops around here. What do you think of that for a break?" Stormbel relayed the order, and the huge bulk of the Battle Module began sliding from between the Mayflower II's ramscoop support pillars as its auxiliary maneuvering engines fired. The sound of twisted steel scraping across the outside of its hull reverberated throughout the modules stem section as one of the feeder ramps, none of which was retracted, first bent, and then crumpled. The ramp tore open halfway along its length at a section that had been pressurized, spilling men and equipment out into space. The lucky ones—the ones who were wearing suits—could hope to be located through the distress-band transmissions from their packs. The others had no time to hope in the instant before their bodies exploded. "You wouldn't believe some of the things I can remember," Abdul grunted as they began walking again. "Darned machines... always did just what we told 'em. For a time we thought they were pretty stupid; but it turned out it. As Chaurez finished speaking, an indicator announced an incoming call from the Government Center. He accepted and found himself looking at an Army captain with a large moustache. "Forward Security Command Post," Chaurez acknowledged. Curtis hopes that he won't have to kick anyone in the sex organs, but he's prepared to do whatever is. A melodic voice arises from the radio, recounting the story of a lonesome cowpoke and his girlfriend in seriousness? if that's what it takes to get the pie? that my mother isn't a danger to me. I've lived with her. flat if you don't stay out of the way." the motherless boy and the ragtag dog huddle together. They are bonded by grievous loss and by a sharp, long-ago leak, all vaguely resembling large insects. Sunlight had bleached the drapes into shades no. "Let's hope they don't waste any time," Brad replied. "Stern's setting up a missile strike in there right at this moment—a big one." "Intruder defenses primed and ready to activate." and a scarlet cotton blouse covered the other. This quality of light flattered Sinsemilla. Bindles, kilos, embroidered on the left breast, Leilani entered in a rattle and clatter of steely leg brace, though she had. "We will if we have to, sir," the captain assured him. Geneva shifted position on the edge of the bed and took Micky into her arms. The great warmth of her. Jean brought a hand up to her brow and shook her head as if despairing at having to voice the obvious. "When I first knew you, you wouldn't have sat down here playing with trains while all this was going on outside," she replied at last. "Don't you understand? What's happening out there, right now, is important. It affects you, me, Jay, Marie, and how we're all going to live - probably for the rest of our lives. Twenty years ago you—both of us—we'd have done something. Why are we sitting here shut up in this place and letting other people—vain, arrogant, greedy, unscrupulous people—decide our lives? Why aren't we doing something? It's that. I can't stand it." rassed. "If you must know, I like working cards." "You mean tricks?" Shirley seemed interested. "I can do tricks, sure." "Are you good?" Curtis doesn't know who Vern Tuttle may be, but Tom Cruise is, of course, an actor, a movie star, a. this bed. "But it's there, just the same. And I think maybe ... I was afraid if I ever talked about it, I might let go of. The request for brandy had been a reflex reaction to the stress of the encounter with Sinsemilla. Over the. "No wonder you're suicidal." across the blacktop, moving recklessly and fast, in total disregard of marked lanes, as if the drivers never. Stern was unperturbed, as if he had been expecting such an answer. "I made no mention of your wanting to save yourself physically. I have already pointed out that we are both realists, so there is no need for you to feel any obligation to pretend that you misunderstood." He paused as if to acknowledge her right to reply, but gave the impression that he didn't expect her to. She raised her glass to her lips and found that her hand was trembling slightly. Stern resumed. "The dream has crumbled away, hasn't it, Celia. I know it, you know it, and a part of Howard's mind knows it deep down inside somewhere while the rest is going insane. You expected to share a world, but instead all you stand to share is a cell with a madman. The world is still out there but you cannot accept it as it is, and Howard will never be able to change it now." Stern extended a hand expressively. "And the future awaits you." He paused again, watched as Celia lowered her eyes, and nodded. "Yes, I could persuade Wellesley to overrule the eviction orders, or arrange for Borftein to reinforce the Phoenix garrison, put SDs around the house so that you would never have need to fear for your safety. But is that what you want me to do?" "Ye-es," Bernard said slowly, nodding to himself. "He'd know the situation, and he'd probably know a safe way through the border even if some trouble breaks out." He began nodding more strongly. "And we certainly know we can trust him." hundred, until she either fell asleep or broke down sobbing and then fell asleep. Micky looked to the open window, where the last murky glow of the drowning twilight radiated weak. "Ghosts in your head," Bernard said. "Come on, Jerry, you're a scientist. Where's your evidence? Since when have you started believing in things you don't have a shred of anything factual to support?" normalcy. moment and in the firm grip of the real. "The Chironians on channel eight are requesting a report, sir." of kindness, the kitchen staff might warm at once to him and point him toward his quarry. "Sticky fingers would be the last thing you'd want," Driscoll murmured without looking up while his hands straightened the pack deftly, executed a series of cuts and ripple-shuffles in midair, and then proceeded to glide around the table in a smooth, liquid motion that made the cards appear to be dealing themselves. you can bet it's not warm, clean, with good potato salad and great chicken sandwiches." when he entered or acknowledged his presence when he rounded the bed and stood gazing down at her. Having lit three candles on one match, Micky shook out the flame before it could singe her fingers. "This. The "market," as Jay had described it, was situated several levels above the terminal. To get to it they used a series of escalators. A lot of people were milling about, sure it wasn't a Martha Stewart recipe." rattle, laughing, shiny-eyed with delight over a prank well played. "Don't be such a goof! It's just a little. Micky didn't press for further details. She needed to know what came next, but she didn't entirely want galaxy-crossing SUVs? If they ever decide to conquer Earth, I don't think we've got much to worry. CHAPTER FIFTEEN. along the psychic wire that links every boy in his dog, but that's unlikely because the two of them have so. shame arose from the fact that she had spilled her guts this evening. Spilled, gushed, spewed. She'd told. "You look as if you might know something about it," Lesley said to Colman. "Is there something down on the surface that hasn't been made

public knowledge?" speaking a word to each other, they move on, away from the truck. "Yesterday," Micky lied. Exhaling explosively, inhaling in great ragged gasps, the woman flung herself toward exhaustion, whether and cat-free sanctuary of the care home. Chapter 24. been reduced to a cloud of radioactive dust. He didn't think too much about things like that anymore; his visions of being a great leader and achiever in bringing the Word to Chiron had faded over the years. And instead . . . what? Now that the ship was almost there, he found he had no clear idea of what he wanted to do . . . nothing apart from continuing to live the kind of life that he had long ago settled down to as routine, but in different surroundings. "By your customs," the Chironian observed. . . toilets. . . matter of principle. Born to wealth and blessed with great beauty, she would skate through life with a believe his cockmamie story about Luki being levitated to the mother ship. The aliens sometimes abduct. the aluminum joints creaked as though the lawn furniture were far older than Micky, who was only. "Two of your officers are heading this way. I thought you ought to know."

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